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ABSTRACT

This report presents a balanced approach to the two conventional philosophies of curriculum creation. It begins with a brief history of the debate between an academic curriculum versus a practical curriculum. Academic curriculum supporters emphasize that every pupil should experience a curriculum stressing subject matter learning and be well educated in the academics to qualify for a well-paying job. Advocates of a practical curriculum stress that all pupils need to experience what is useful and has application in society and have opportunities to apply and use what has scope and sequence of teaching content of both educational philosophies are presented. The paper suggests the following methods that will provide a balanced curriculum, where pupils experience a breadth of experiences with a vocational emphasis starting with kindergarten; elementary pupils will have opportunities to visit workplaces; middle school/junior high pupils experience units of study on careers; senior high students concentrate on particular careers; and graduates are guided in the school-to-work transition. In this model, teachers will assess pupil progress in academic areas through observation and written materials, and instructors in a utilitarian curriculum will focus on pupils using what has been learned. (YLB)

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THE CURRICULUM: ACADEMIC OR UTILITARIAN?

How much of academic learning should pupils experience in school? The academic objectives stress content areas such as history, geography, the sciences, mathematics, literature and the language arts. The utilitarian stresses vocational areas, consumer mathematics, application of science to every day living, as well as practical experiences in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

There has been a long debate over which type of education is best for pupils. Plato, in ancient Athens during the third century BC, advocated an abstract curriculum which would separate pupils into three classes as they progressed through formal schooling Ulich, 1954). These classes were the artisans or workers at the lowest level, the warriors or soldiers at the middle level, and the philosopher kings or rulers at the apex of achievement. The philosopher kings would have the highest ability levels and could attempt to understand the Forms. The Forms stressed Perfections as in heaven above the here and the now. The Forms presented a model for rulers and governmental leaders as to what should be in terms of government in Plato's ideal Republic. Quintilian in the first century AD (Ulich, 1950) was critical of schools that were not utilitarian or practical.

During the 1930's, there was a relevant debate between William Chandler Bagley and John Dewey, two well known educators, on the academic versus the practical curriculum. Bagley was very strong on pupils learning basic academic content. Subject matter boundaries should be kept pure and not interrelated. For example, social studies should not be taught since it weakened inherent social science content, but rather history and geography must be taught as separate subjects. Bagley frowned upon interdisciplinary curricula. Academic subject matter taught to pupils should be demanding and vital. Teaching academic subject matter was vital in Bagley's curriculum (Wahlquist, 1942). John Dewey, also a professor of education at Columbia University in New York City, emphasized practical learnings for pupils.

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Dewey believed strongly that school and society be integrated, not separate entities. His philosophy of teaching stressed pupils engaging in problem solving. These problems needed to be lifelike and real (Dewey, 1915).

Advocates of the Academics. Academic experts in education believe that each and every pupil needs to experience a curriculum stressing subject matter learning. Subject matter should then come from the academic disciplines. Objectives need identification that emphasize vital content from the academic disciplines. All pupils need to achieve sophisticated subject matter and not be placed into the lower status vocational or utilitarian classes. Subject matter is prized highly in society. Each pupil should be acquiring the sophisticated content. Only then will learners, as adults, obtain the better paying jobs and vocations. Prior to that time many learners will be attending classes and receiving degrees from colleges and universities. Higher achievement and status will be the end result for all individuals. If pupils do not receive a demanding academic curriculum, they will be penalized later as they pursue work that is necessary to perform and pays respectful salaries. Then too, it discriminates among pupils if the talented and gifted only pursue academic goals and the rest are recipients of a utilitarian curriculum. Utilitarian education seemingly has much less prestige as compared to the academic. Democracy as a way of life stresses equality among individuals, not segregation. Equality comes about when each pupil experiences the same curriculum with the same emphasized standards. Slow learners can achieve worthwhile sophisticated subject matter objectives. High expectations from all pupils are necessary. Pupils of lesser achievement need to be assisted to catch up with higher achieving pupils. A lack of esteem and a low self concept makes for underachievement among pupils. High teacher expectations for all pupils guides optimal achievement for each learner.

Advocates of the Utilitarian Curriculum. What is learned should be used in society. The content is applicable to new situations. The utilitarian becomes a means to an end and that end is to solve problems.

In society, people believe that individuals should become skilled at a job or vocation and be self supporting. The school curriculum needs to have carefully chosen objectives for pupil achievement so that practicality is in evidence. Society needs workers who can excel and be productive in and at the work place. The best place to start with a utilitarian curriculum is on the kindergarten level, earlier if the school provides a nursery school.

Objectives should stress cognitive, affective, and psychomotor objectives. Each objective needs careful selection and is achievable by pupils. The objectives need arranging so that they are attained by learners in ascending order of complexity. Success in goal attainment is vital for all pupils. Learning opportunities need to be available which will assist pupils to achieve the stated objectives. Quality appraisal procedures need to be available which truly assess if pupils are progressing toward stated objectives.

The business world wants trained and educated workers who can enter the world of work and be able to make choices and decisions. These workers should be able to identify and solve problems as well as be able to think critically and creatively. Thus a hands on approach to learning needs adequate emphasis in the school setting. The US is in competition with other nations in the economic world. Each worker needs to be educated as much as abilities permit. A utilitarian curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to apply and use what has been learned. Learning should not be emphasized for its own sake, but rather to have pupils use what has been learned. A practical curriculum assures pupils that objectives attained in school make for utility in ongoing lessons and units of study.

Scope and Sequence in the Academic Curriculum. In the academic curriculum areas, each subject matter area taught has vital content that needs identification. The identified content then may become objectives for pupil attainment. Subject matter specialists on the college/ university levels should have ample input into the academic school curriculum. Each academician in his / her academic area of specialty needs to select

what stresses the structure of the involved subject matter area. periodically, academicians in their respective areas of expertise need to get together and harmonize efforts in arriving at key structural ideas for teachers to use in the public schools. Thus, for example, historians from the college/ university level would get together and cooperatively choose major subject matter content for pupil school pupils to attain. If teaches on the public school levels freely had access to these structural ideas, pupils in the public schools would then have a better chance to attain what is relevant and significant. Learning opportunities might then be chosen by teachers in the public schools to guide pupils in attaining the identified structural ideas. Quality appraisal procedures needed to be chosen to ascertain if pupils have been successful in goal attainment. Adequate time should be given to pupils' questions and comments in the academic curriculum. The academic curriculum could truly be strengthened using these procedures.

Scope or breadth of content covered in ongoing lessons and units of study could be determined cooperatively by university/ college professors and public school teachers in their academic areas of specialty. Sequence or order of teaching content in the public schools should be the role of the public school classroom teacher. The teacher is close to pupils and should determine what learnings pupils need in an ordered sequence.

Scope and Sequence in the Utilitarian Curriculum. Pupils in the public schools should experience a scope, breadth of experiences, which stresses a vocational emphasis starting with the kindergarten level of instruction. Here, parents and other resource personnel may share with pupils in the classroom work engaged in as well as bring in the tools of the trade in the vocation being followed. Meaning and understanding of the diverse trades being stressed is salient. Scope should stress as many vital jobs and occupations as is feasible for young learners to understand. In sequence or order, the vocations being stressed at higher grade levels in ongoing lessons and units of study should harmonize with learner growth and development characteristics.

Elementary age pupils should have opportunities to visit the work place being studied in an ongoing unit of study to ask questions and reflect upon answers given. Middles school/ junior high pupils should continue experiencing units of study on careers, but in greater depth as compared to the elementary years of schooling. They should discuss career interests with a qualified guidance counselor. Middle school/ junior high pupils need assist workers in the work place several class periods each week. Employees should discuss expectations at the work place with pupils. Teachers need to assist middle school/ junior high pupils with necessary information on vital careers as well as supervise work experiences of learners. Senior high students need to concentrate more in depth pertaining to particular careers as compared to younger age pupils. Those students leaving high school after graduation to enter the work force should be guided to make a satisfactory transition form school to the world of work. Followup studies by the high school should be made to determine the success of the high school vocational training program in meeting the needs of future workers.

There are a variety of learning opportunities available to assist pupils with teacher guidance to achieve more optimally in the k- 12 career education curriculum. These include quality video tapes and disks, journal articles, daily newspaper and Newsweek writings pertaining to careers, films, slides, filmstrips, study prints, and single concept film loops on careers at the work place. Adequate emphasis should be placed upon the school having numerous trade books on career education for pupils. Methods of instruction should include discussion, brainstorming, committe work, cooperative learning, problem solving endeavors, inductive and deductive learning, large group instruction, and individual study. As much as possible, a hands on approach should be used in a utilitarian curriculum. What is taught is useful and furthers sequentially pupils experiences in moving toward entering the world of work. Thus reading skills become very important for each pupil. I have read manuals on car repair work, furnace and airconditioner installation, and body/ fender work, among others.

These manuals are complex indeed. IT behooves the pupil to become skillful in reading content pertaining to the world of work. The contents can be quite difficult indeed to read.

Ediger (1993), in writing about futurism pertaining to vocational education, indicated the following needed changes:

1. Research conducted by specialists in vocational education will result in a new scope and sequence.
2. New theories in vocational education will be developed.
3. Instructional methods and procedures must be based on theory.
4. Objectives in vocational education will reflect that which is needed in the workforce in society.
5. Balance among knowledge, skills, and attitudinal objectives in teaching and learning are salient.
6. Learning activities will be more varied than ever before to provide for individual differences.
7. Better means of diagnosing student difficulties in learning will be in evidence.
8. Improved procedures of appraising vocational education students' progress will be in evidence.
9. Instructors will complete preservice and graduate school requirements for teaching from accredited colleges/ universities.
10. Ample inservice programs for instructors will be available to update quality in teaching.

Evaluation of Academic Achievement. Pupil progress in the academic arenas may be assessed in a variety of ways. It is always important to stress using teacher observation. The teacher using quality criteria can appraise learner achievement effectively through teacher observation. The teacher then needs to observe which pupils are on task, actively involved in ongoing activities, interested in acquiring/ pursuing knowledge, desirous of doing additional work, eager in working with others and by themselves, and are curious pertaining to gaps in subject matter knowledge. Teacher observation definitely needs to include how well learners are moving in the direction of assessing

information, being creative in dealing with subject matter, and valuing contributions form the academic world.

there are additional approaches which might be used to evaluate pupil achievement in academic learnings. Norm and criterion referenced tests are used commonly to appraise pupil achievement in achieving academic goals. Norm reference tests lack goals for the teacher to use in teaching pupils. A hit or miss approach in teaching is involved when teachers have no knowledge of which goals are being stressed in the norm referenced test. Criterion referenced tests have predetermined objectives for pupil attainment. The teacher then has some basis for knowing what pupils will be tested on as a result of instruction. However, these tests, as is true of norm referenced tests, tends to emphasize measuring the lowest level of cognition. Both of these tests contain multiple choice test items and therefore pupils lack opportunities to provide unique, novel responses to test items. Multiple choice test items stress recognition by pupils of what is correct from among four responses. True-false and matching test items also tend to emphasize measuring what is factual in terms of learner responses. Essay test items, well written, may certainly stress creative responses form pupils. This is true particularly if the essay items are open ended permitting pupils to interpret, think, analyze, infer, and predict. Many schools are emphasizing a portfolio approach in appraising learner progress. A portfolio takes time to prepare. A representative sampling of pupil work needs to be in evidence in a portfolio. Thus written work involving diverse purposes, tape recordings, snapshots, videotapes, test results (teacher written, norm, and /or criterion referenced tests), among others, may be used to show pupil products and processes in learning. a major purpose here should be to indicate pupils attaining relevant goals in the curriculum.

Evaluation in a Utilitarian Curriculum. The instructor here must be interested in pupils using what has been learned. Functional use in school and in society must be appraised in terms of what pupils have learned in the practical curriculum. Teachers need to observe pupil

progress in ongoing lessons and units of study on careers. Elementary school pupil will explore careers using concrete, semiconcrete, and abstract activities. Teacher written tests may be used to ascertain learner achievement. However, contextual evaluation is more important. Within a specific learning opportunity, pupils should be able to use that which is practical and utilitarian. Careful observation by the teacher with the use of quality standards as guidelines should assist in determining achievement. Learning by doing is the heart of the utilitarian curriculum. Reality and reality based learning is at the core of teaching and learning. Pupils in high school need to be appraised in terms of how well they are doing in and at the work place as well as in the public school classroom in which careers are studied in depth. Learners need to focus upon jobs and occupations in a serious manner. This does not mean that high school pupils will make permanent decisions pertaining to careers, but rather these learners are making attempts at zeroing in upon what might make for a future vocational choice. Individual differences need to be provided for in that selected pupils take a longer period of time to make career choices and decisions as compared to others. Guidance counselors should be available to guide the learner to clarify, think, and reflect upon what might make for a quality decision in terms of careers and the world of work. Self evaluation by the pupil is always important at any age and achievement level.

The teacher needs to use checklists, anecdotal statements, journal writing, as well as diary entries and log appraisals to reflect upon each pupil's progress in the practical, utilitarian curriculum. In using a variety of procedures to apprise pupil achievement, the teacher of the practical curriculum may obtain information which will be useful in assisting learners to attain more optimally.

In Conclusion

Debates persist pertaining to an academic versus a utilitarian curriculum for pupils in the public schools. The academic curriculum has strong support as being vital for all pupils. Many educators and the lay

public believe that academics being superior to the utilitarian. The academic curriculum supporters emphasize the following rationale for implementing their philosophy of education:

1. society prizes and values the academic routes in curriculum much more so as compared to the utilitarian.

2. pupils need to be well educated in the academics to quality for a well paying job or position in the future.

3. learners need sophisticated knowledge for all levels of ability and not be penalized for life by being tracked into a vocational curriculum.

4. an academic curriculum leads to pupils progressing on to the higher education level rather than the world of work following high school.

5. the essentials or basics consisting of the academics provide pupils with a foundation for all later learning, be it the arena of working in the abstract or in the vocational.

Advocates of a practical curriculum stress the following for pupils in the public school setting:

1. all pupils need to experience that which is useful and has application values in society.

2. knowledge, skills, and attitudes are not of value unless the utilitarian is stressed in applying in a concrete situation that which has been learned.

3. pupil progress in being successful in the world of work is an ultimate goal for everyone after the formal education years have been completed.

4. nations are competitive on the world scene in developing and maintaining economic strength; capable workers are needed in the work place.

5. pupils need to achieve viable goals through quality learning opportunities in order to be successful; a practical curriculum relates much better to the world of work and in being a good citizen in society.

The debate between an academic versus a practical curriculum has long been analyzed and disputed in terms of which is better for pupils. Perhaps, the two need harmonizing. Thus each pupil needs to experience the academic and the practical. Academic content could be taught as being related to that which can be used by the learner. The academics are not stressed for their own sake, but rather for use and application. A vocational emphasis could stress the academics in that decisions made incorporate subject matter knowledge. For example, mathematics can definitely be functional and useful. Learners need to perceive that mathematics can be used and applied in the real world. as another example, reading how to do something can be quite complex such as reading directions on how to make needed repairs by the consumer of an automobile. The contents herein can truly be complicated and yet practical indeed!

During the eighteenth century, the German philosopher Hegel stressed the importance of dialectical reasoning with a thesis, an antithesis, and a synthesis between these two opposites (Russell, 1972). In this paper on the academic curriculum versus the utilitarian, it is stated above that the two philosophies might be harmonized or synthesized. A very important synthesis also needs to occur between the superiority of the academic versus the vocational. The divisions need to be blurred so that pupils eventually may choose which is better personally rather than which is superior sociologically. Brubacher (1966), too, raised the question, "Why are practical and vocational subjects held in lower esteem as compared to cultural ones?"

In society, workers are needed who do not necessarily possess an academic bent as a preference. But society needs many workers who perform in the world of work effectively and get things done which benefit all. Diverse talents and abilities are needed for any nation to grow, achieve, and develop. Each pupil then needs to achieve as optimally as possible, be it in the academic, vocational, social, or a combination of these categories.

More and more emphasis is being placed upon the "Theory of Multiple Intelligences" (Gardner, 1993) with its stress placed upon spatial, linguistic, logical- mathematical, musical, interpersonal, body- kinesthetic, and intrapersonal intelligences and abilities that might well differentiate one person from another. The talents of each person need to be identified and nurtured. Also. these intelligences need to be integrated and interrelated. An integrated curriculum assists pupils to perceive knowledge as being related, not isolated entities (Jacobs, 1989).

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